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ABSTRACT

Based on the thesis that cycles of concern for an integrated, holistic approach to English language instruction have periodically emerged in reaction to historical forces that are essentially fragmenting in their effects, this thematic report explores events in 20th-century American educational theory, research, and practice that deal with English language education. Two fundamental and enduring facts about English education in the schools which the report examines are the subordination of writing to reading and the other language skills and the separation of language skills from one another--particularly the isolation of reading from writing. Using perspectives drawn from American educational and social history, the report identifies five forces--the democratization of schooling, the professionalization of educators, technological change, the pragmatic character of American culture, and liberationist ideologies--and probes their analytically separable but interacting influences on English language education. Following a summary of the evidence of the assertions that writing has been dominated by reading in schools and that writing and reading have been separated for most of their histories, the report provides illustrations of the prevailing opinion that integration in language education is the proper approach, giving rise to cycles of reform aimed at such integration. It then gives an overview of the 19th century emergence of English as an identifiable subject of the school curriculum, and addresses the ways in which the forces cited promoted both separation and integration of the teaching of writing and reading. (One hundred ninety-six footnotes are attached.) (NKA)

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A SISYPHEAN TASK:
Historical Perspectives on the Relationship Between Writing and Reading Instruction

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A SISYPHEAN TASK:
Historical Perspectives on the Relationship Between Writing and Reading Instruction

by

Geraldine Joncich Clifford[1]
University of California, Berkeley

> "The mind has a thousand eyes," and like Argus, education must look at life through every one of them!
>
> Mr. Hosic was the gallant Theseus who liberated distressed curriculum from this cramping limitation and made possible expansion and liberation of the materials of instruction.

Given their classical educations, the first several generations of "modern" English language educators were more given than we are to view pedagogical reform in the terms of epic struggles. The two examples above were drawn from a 1936 publication of the National Council of Teachers of English, *A Correlated Curriculum*, which advocated the integration of writing, reading, speaking, and listening activities in the schools.[2] In truth, the battles to improve teaching and learning in the language arts were often mere skirmishes, the results neither victory nor defeat but stalemates. Sisyphus, not Hercules, is the hero of most school wars. To see this more clearly we now turn from Greek mythology to history, which is itself a tamer version of myth-making. History will give us better insight into the confounded and often cyclical nature of reform in education. The title chosen for this essay reflects that fact, using the imagery of the Corinthian ruler condemned to push a heavy object up a steep hill. His was a task with which teachers can readily identify.

INTRODUCTION

> You are living during a time that in our profession will be known as the beginning of the most thoroughgoing revolutionary development in the teaching of English in the 20th century. What will you do? Whether you yourself participate in that revolution, catch the caboose as the train rolls by, or simply sit and watch--that is up to you.[3]

This confident challenge was issued in 1964 by Professor Harold Allen of the University of Minnesota. It reminds one of another, equally confident prediction made during that same decade about the impending role of instructional technology: "Elementary, high school, or college teachers . . . who rely exclusively upon the teacher-centered lecture, demonstration, or explaining technique . . . now find themselves virtually expendable with the advent of television teaching."[4] Both men, of course, saw the events that they

wanted to see and invested more vitality, or historicity, in them than proved warranted. These were, however, errors of judgment that we, too, will probably make about change in our own times.

The closer integration of writing and reading instruction is presently a popular topic. In describing the trends that characterize reading research developments during the 1970s, Jeanne Chall and Steven Stahl point to an increased interest in the past two decades in writing and in the relationship between writing and reading.[5] Janet Emig, an active participant in that movement, states her conviction that that movement is appropriate and seemingly inevitable. She argues:

> For learning and teaching writing and the other language arts cannot sensibly be regarded discretely and in isolation from one another. Reading impinges on writing, which in turn is transformed by listening and talking. Sponsorship of wholly autonomous research inquiries and curricular ventures into any one of the four language processes is now theoretically and empirically suspect.[6]

Will assessments like Emig's be sustained by future developments? Or, will some later historian of language education liken them to the fate of those early 1950s' futurists who confidently predicted that every home would soon have its own helicopter pad?

The Utilities of the History of Education

The study of our past offers some protection against the danger of falling victim to a tendency to view the immediate events of one's present as indicative of a trend. A trend is, ironically, only a mental construct used by historians and similar seekers after tidiness.[7] That fact explains why the past always appears more orderly than does one's present. "History never looks like history when you are living through it," John Gardner once reminded us; rather, "it always looks confusing and messy, and it always feels uncomfortable."[8]

In addition, many a trend proves to be *partly reversible*--at least over the short run--if the forces supporting it are repudiated or diverted into other channels. So, in a sketch of the history of composition in American education, Alvina Treut Burrows aptly refers to the "crosscurrents and strong headwinds" that obstruct progress, of regressions, of action followed by reaction.[9] There is ample evidence from history to support this view.

It is, therefore, tempting to view history as a series of cycles endlessly repeated. Another common metaphor likens history to a pendulum. This is misleading since a pendulum returns to the place from which it began its swing. This is not true of social events. For example, today's quest for "back to basics" in education cannot, and does not intend to, return us to that single and even undeterminable place where we somehow went wrong. Too much else has changed in the interim, and the standards of the past would no longer be acceptable even to the critics of present arrangements. Today's "basic literacy," for example, incorporates expectations that far exceed those which satisfied our forebears.[10] A United States Commissioner of Education at the turn of this century, William T. Harris, is rumored to have described the course of educational progress as "a zigzag, from one extreme to another." But hindsight shows us that the reversals were not as extreme as they then appeared. Still, the fact that

Harris spoke thus is instructive about the course of educational developments. If there is anything about which we can be reasonably certain it is that our successors will draw similar conclusions about their own times.

The Plan of this Essay

The thesis of this essay is that cycles of concern for an integrated, holistic approach to English language instruction have periodically emerged in reaction to historical forces that are essentially fragmenting in their effects. We will explore events in 20th-century American educational theory, research, and practice that illustrate and explain two fundamental and long-persisting facts about English language education in the schools. First, writing has been subordinated to reading and the other language skills taught in schools. Second, language skills have been separated from one another; in particular reading has been isolated from writing. The approach we take will be *thematic*, not chronological. There are better places to look for a systematic, sequential, time-oriented review of the major landmarks in the history of English language education, notably Arthur N. Applebee's 1974 work, *Tradition and Reform in the Teaching of English*[11] and H. Alan Robinson's briefer 1977 collection, *Reading and Writing Instruction in the United States*.[12]

This is an essay using perspectives drawn from American educational and social history. It identifies five forces--the democratization of schooling, the professionalization of educators, technological change, the functionalist or pragmatic character of American culture, and liberationist ideologies--and probes their analytically separable but interacting influences on English language education. We will see that these influences promoted both separation and integration of the teaching of writing and reading. First, however, comes (a) a summary of the evidence for the assertions that writing has been dominated by reading in schools and that writing and reading have been separated for most of their histories; next, (b) illustrations of the prevailing opinion that integration in language education is the proper approach, giving rise to cycles of reform aimed at such integration; and then, (c) an overview of the emergence in the 19th century of English as an identifiable subject of the school and college curriculum.

WRITING AND READING IN THE CURRICULUM

The Low Estate of Writing in the Schools

The very first report that considered issues of secondary schooling in a national context--the 1894 report of the Committee of Ten--both declared that writing and reading are equal in importance and recommended that literature receive double the time that composition should have. No such landmark document exists for elementary education, but in a present-day work on interrelating writing and reading in the elementary school, the authors contend that "reading has dominated the scene in language arts instruction, research, and funding." Furthermore, "in most elementary classrooms, reading instruction dominates the day, starts the instructional agenda, controls grouping, and dictates schedules."[13] Years of studies of how classroom time is spent support this contention. In grades 1, 3, and 5 in the mid-1980s, only 15% of the school day was spent on writing; of that, two-thirds was spent on word-for-word copying in workbooks.[14] Investigations of secondary schools by the National Council of Teachers of English (hereafter NCTE) have repeatedly shown that more time was spent on literature

than on all other aspects of the English curriculum *combined*; in the early 1980s, national reports indicated that less than 10% of a student's time in English was spent writing connected prose.[15] A study of 168 exemplary American high schools during the early 1960s--schools with high state or national reputations--reported that reading (i.e., literature) received roughly 3 1/2 times more attention than writing (i.e., composition) in English classrooms; moreover, English teachers were spending more time "teaching" composition through marking student papers at home than they were engaging in actual classroom writing instruction; further, most of their marking was of the proofreading kind.[16] Add to this distribution the far greater amount of reading than writing in the other "content" subjects of the curriculum, and the subordination of writing to reading becomes even more evident.

Another kind of domination of writing by reading is the longtime proclivity of upper grade teachers to assign writing in response to literature, that is, to make writing a test of whether students have read and (perhaps) comprehended. An early complaint about this relationship was articulated in 1913:

> For a considerable period the desire to unify the course in English, and especially the literature and composition, led to forced relations that were not to the advantage of either. Pupils were required to write too frequently on literary subjects that were beyond their grasp, with the result that the compositions were insincere and futile, and the pupil's love of literature hindered rather than helped.[17]

To try to remedy this situation, in 1909 the National Conference on College Entrance Requirements in English, comprised of high school and college teachers, adopted a report recommending that composition, instead, be substantially built upon "such experiences as come within the pupil's daily life and observation."[18] That this recommendation was only partially accepted is clear from the Anglo-American Dartmouth Conference held 55 years later; some of the members of the Dartmouth seminar group on literature still held to the view that response to literature was the best means to improving writing.[19] In fact, the 1960s appear to represent a period when literature, from *Charlotte's Web* through *The Ox-Bow Incident*, was rather generally held to provide "eminently suitable and endless topics for writing."[20]

When Purdue University developed materials for the teaching of seventh grade English, a curriculum funded by the United States Office of Education under the 1960s' Project English, it was described as "opus-centered" in its approach to language integration. The authors wrote:

> Literature is our target language. We steep pupils in reading; then we involve them in writing and speaking about what they have read. We also involve them in writing and speaking about their personal experiences that the literary work echoes.[21]

Purdue's effort led to an amalgam of the traditional literary emphasis plus references to students' own needs and experiences. In fact, both emphases recur and compete *throughout* the history of English language education in the past two centuries.

Literary essays have been generally accepted, even by advocates of enlarging writing's place in schooling, as long as they do not exclude other writing.[22] Writing experts do not consider the book report as an attempt to connect school writing and

reading, composition and literature. This writing is usually, instead, an artifact, intended to check on reading. In James Moffett's blunt words, this commonplace assignment puts writing and reading in "a stupefyingly negative relationship to each other that makes students want to avoid both." Unwittingly, teachers have accepted practices that make writing a punishment for reading.[23]

By the 1980s the National Assessment of Educational Progress examinations gave focused publicity to writing deficiencies. Despite this, the place of writing has not apparently grown much. The most recent large survey--The National Study of Writing in the Secondary School, sponsored by the National Institute of Education--discovered that school and homework writing activities were limited in both time and scope. Although about 40% of class time was spent in paper-and-pencil work, only 3% of students' class and homework time was spent on composing text of paragraph or greater length.[24] Furthermore, students in the lower tracks of the high schools generally had still fewer opportunities to write. Since the conventional wisdom of the English profession is that one learns to write by writing, the restricted amounts of opportunity for instruction and practice have been lamented for decades.

Another indicator of the relative status of writing and reading in the history of American schooling is the attention that authors have paid to each. The annual publications of the National Society for the Study of Education are a reasonably reliable barometer of their relative activity and importance. To date, the Society has published 85 two-volume yearbooks. Nine have been devoted to reading, six others to all other aspects of English language education: in 1906, 1923, 1944, 1970, 1977, and 1986. Only two, a 1923 and a 1986 volume, considered composition exclusively. Also, as Shirley Brice Heath has observed, published histories of education give far more attention to the teaching of reading than to the teaching of writing[25]; in fact, most historical index entries for *writing* refer to penmanship rather than to composition. Furthermore, although histories do not make this fact explicit, such important school problems as truancy, "retardation" (failure to be promoted), and early school leaving ("dropping out") were related to reading rather than to writing achievement. This is not surprising given the consistently greater attention that reading and literature have received in both mass and elite education. In their quest to reconstruct the past, a major source for historians is schoolbooks. Unlike the hornbooks, primers, and "eclectic" readers (anthologies) of the colonial and national periods and the ubiquitous spellers of the 19th century, composition books were not present except for rhetoric texts used in the colleges.

It has been said of American education that "if it's not tested, it's not taught!" As a consequence, some exponents of writing have periodically tried to develop tests of expository and imaginative writing abilities in order to *legitimize* this area. The movement for "objective" (quick-scoring), standardized tests of school subjects began around 1910. One after another field was quickly targeted, but reading tests were consistently the most widely used. This occurred because of the great importance of reading in the elementary schools, which enrolled the vast majority of all American school children before World War II, and because vocabulary knowledge, which could be readily tested, appeared to be a reliable proxy measure for assessing reading competence in general.

A somewhat different situation existed in secondary schools. Although theirs was a "word field"--like reading, spelling, shorthand, and foreign language instruction--many teachers of literature have been consistently unsympathetic to standardized tests. They were offended by the aesthetics and logic of standardized testing. Moreover, by being

concentrated in the high schools where the pressures for accountability were far less than what obtained in mass (elementary) education, literature teachers were somewhat protected. Therefore, externally-imposed tests were fewer and less consequential in the professional lives of secondary English teachers. This did not save them from criticism, however; for example, in the 1930s, the supervisor of the New York City Schools' program in remedial education singled out English teachers for their "wont to arrogate to themselves the holy mission of spreading the gospel of beauty and truth," for their "belletristic bias," for their deplorable concern "with 'Creativism' in all its forms at the expense of basic instruction in reading. . . ."[26] What has been said of the difficulties of testing literature and getting teacher support for such testing was even more true of composition, as we will see later in this essay.

Perhaps the best measure of the different status of writing and reading instruction is the weight of their respective research traditions. No field surpasses reading as a subject of investigation. By 1960, "some 4,000 careful, scientific studies of the sociology, psychology, and teaching of reading" already existed.[27] Through the 1960s, when educational research was relatively well-funded, 350 reading studies were filed annually.[28] In contrast, between 1955 and 1980, a total of only 156 studies was completed in the United States on writing in the elementary grades, and most of these were unpublished dissertations. Further, most writing studies were surveys of practices and other descriptive investigations of teacher preparation, censorship cases, and so on, rather than experimental or qualitative studies.[29] Except for that on the weak relationship between studying grammar and improved writing, the research was generally inconclusive; teachers got little of value to go on.[30] At the height of funding for educational research, writing got less than 1/10 of 1% of all educational research dollars; calculating all public school spending on textbooks, personnel, and materials related to writing and reading, Donald Graves concluded that "for every $3000 spent on children's ability to receive information, $1.00 was spent on their power to send it in writing."[31] Reporting in the 1982 *Encyclopedia of Educational Research* on writing, composition, and rhetoric, Janet Emig concluded that these three areas did not even comprise a field of research before 1970, since they were not "the subjects and objects of wide and systematic inquiry." Further, almost no studies had been undertaken on the important questions surrounding writing across the curriculum.[32]

A manifestation of the recent effort to raise the educational and research status of writing, to enhance its equivalency to reading, is to stress the "process" and not the "product" of writing, to study composing and not the composition. As Burton Hatlin has put it, "'Process' suggests change, fluidity, indeterminacy: all positive values in a society that has prided itself on its presumed freedom from fixed hierarchies, which admires 'self-made' people, and which throughout its history hymned the open road."[33] Reading has that status among many educators; why not writing?

The Separation of Reading from Writing

In a 1986 review of theory and research conducted by the Center for the Study of Reading, the authors comment on the persisting separation of writing and reading instruction in the schools:

> They are commonly taught as individual subjects and in quite different ways. The way they are tested is usually quite different. Reading performance is often scored with multiple choice test items as either right or wrong; writing performance is often scored using qualitative comparisons.[34]

Many teachers continued to favor this separation, however. In 1957, the California State Department of Education surveyed secondary school teachers. It found that the majority favored separating the time devoted to the teaching of literature from that given to composition and oral language.[35] Even under the pressure of various school reform movements and given developments in language-related disciplines, separatism persisted. For example, the curriculum used in Portland, Oregon schools offered six "discrete" language-study units during the four-year high school program; the language units were not correlated with one another nor with speech, and only slightly with composition or literature. In 1964, Portland's was described as the "principal functional language-content school program in the United States"[36]; what it lacked in language integration it supposedly made up for in high student consciousness of language. But instructional atomism probably reached its peak, to date, during the craze of the 1970s for behavioral objectives. Critics pointed to one city whose school board "had set 1200 of these objectives in the language arts alone; none of the 1200 suggested that the students might read a book or write a page describing their understanding of a trip to a museum or solve a word problem in mathematics."[37]

Observations about the fragmentation of the curriculum antedate these illustrations, however. In elementary school basal readers, teachers' manuals, and workbooks throughout this century it was persistently noted that writing of text was seldom called for; the writing that was required typically consisted of underlining, circling, and supplying one-word responses. In the early years of this century, reforms in the teaching of reading turned the emphasis from oral to silent reading and from word-calling to thought-getting; even these reforms did not ordinarily involve writing. In 1913, in an era when, to most teachers and to the public, "writing" meant penmanship rather than composing text, there was some discussion of writing in relation to speech and motor development but little in relation to reading.[38] What is the explanation? In substantial measure writing was overlooked or rejected in elementary schools because of ignorance of children's early writing. It was the general belief that writing must be delayed until reading and handwriting skills were secure, perhaps to the third grade or later. Postponement often meant neglect, however.

Given the research that showed statistical interrelationships of language skills, a prominent reading expert wondered, "Would the relationships found to exist among the various language arts areas and abilities be changed if instructional procedures were actually designed to reinforce and facilitate the learnings in other areas?"[39] Twice, in the 1930s and the 1950s, NCTE tried to promote greater instructional linkages between the language areas. The volumes of the NCTE Commission on the English Curriculum--in 1952, 1954, and 1956--placed particular emphasis on writing in an integrated language arts approach. But since complaints continued about the isolation existing among the language areas in the curriculum, there is presumptive evidence that these two language arts movements had limited influence on teaching practices at all levels.

Moreover, there were countervailing forces at work. For example, believing that there was an overemphasis on language and composition in the federally-funded projects launched during the post-Sputnik years, the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) appointed its own Commission on English. It proposed a tripartite division of high school English into language, literature, and composition; reading and other skills were ignored.[40] Both this Commission and the federal government sponsored summer institutes for English teachers based on this tripartite pattern, sometimes with a workshop that aimed to provide some integration across the areas; the workshops were reported to be the weakest element in the whole program.[41]

As economic and social change made attendance at the American high school a universal experience of adolescence, comprehensive and vocational senior high schools began to add reading courses, reading teachers, and reading programs. The term "developmental reading" was coined to describe this new obligation of the high school, instead of "remedial reading" which many teachers, students, and parents believed it to be. Like those celebrated critics of "dumbing down" the curriculum and textbooks, Bertrand Evans and James Lynch, many English teachers drew a distinction between "reading materials" and "literature."[42] If high schools had such a program, and many did not, teachers of developmental reading might be grouped apart from the English department faculty.[43] If developmental reading teachers were not separated, there still might be questions as to whether the budget for their programs should be a part of the English budget. Rarely did writing instruction profit from this appearance of reading instruction in the high schools.

Whether they taught literature or composition or both, English teachers tended *not* to belong to the International Reading Association. They tended not to know of the existence of one of the largest circulation journals in all of education, *The Reading Teacher*. For their part, IRA members might be oblivious of the journal *Language Arts*. Here were yet other signs of the isolation of writing and reading. In this case it was reinforced by the chasm that effectively separates elementary from secondary school teachers. We will have more to say about this later in this essay.

Cycles of Interest in Relating the Language Arts

Regardless of the practices followed in the schools, throughout the 20th century one can find evidence that opinion leaders in English education favored the integrated teaching and practice of the language skills. For the entry on composition in the 1913 *A Cyclopedia of Education*, the nation's first such reference book, the author opined that, in the high school, "the divorce between English composition and other subjects is an evidence that our systems are still imperfect."[44] In the 1930s, the term for enhancing the desired writing/reading relationships was "integration." In 1950, A. Sterl Artley, subsequently a president of the International Reading Association, recalled the efforts made in the 1930s by NCTE's Commission on the English Curriculum to promote interrelationships among the language processes taught in elementary and secondary schools. He called them the "initial steps in a transition from the compartmentalized subject matter areas of reading, oral and written composition, spelling, and handwriting to an integrated or fused language arts or communications program."[45] Artley acknowledged, however, that it was easier to adopt the language arts label than to institute the required changes in teaching practices, and that traditions of separatism still flourished. This was true despite the occasional appearance of basal reading series, professional books, and school district courses of study that espoused such approaches.[46] In many cases integrated programs existed in name only, "since it is the practice to teach two weeks of writing, followed by two weeks of 'oral composition,' followed by two weeks of something else," Artley conceded.

A quarter century later, in the late 1970s, in commenting on the calls for "back to basics," NCTE's political action group--SLATE: Support for Learning and Teaching of English--reiterated the case for integrated language instruction, thinking that it saw promising new signs of such a development:

> The movement has been decidedly away from the teaching of skills in isolation and the traditional emphasis upon grammar exercises, sentence

parsing, and other drillwork. Instead, NCTE advocates the importance of language arts skills being used to reinforce each other. In this process of reinforcement, students explore a wide range of reading interests, get involved in a variety of related learning activities, and thereby develop a firmer grasp of all of the necessary language competencies.[47]

In this latest reform cycle, NCTE was being driven by events largely external to the schools: by the economic, social, cultural, and political forces that give context to education in any society. But professional developments also figure in that context. One such development was the state of research on writing/reading relationships. When the first *Handbook of Research on Teaching* was published in 1963, a small corpus of investigations and theory existed to support the opinions of many prominent English educators about the value of integrated language arts.[48] Although reading specialists were less concerned with the issue, they, too, were informed that writing activities like note-taking, outlining, and summarizing improved reading comprehension scores, and that good readers were likely to do more creative writing.[49] Twenty years later, in *Becoming Readers in a Complex Society*, a publication of the National Society for the Study of Education, another pair of reading specialists was ready to take a more systematic look. They concluded that only the first steps had been taken to develop a research base: "Connections between writing and reading are only now beginning to enjoy avid research attention, so that little of substance is as yet known about ways in which writing can enhance reading comprehension."[50] Here, again, is that tendency, noted in the beginning of this essay, for each generation to *think* it perceives a change but which a later generation claims for *its* own time.

In the "soft" social and behavioral sciences that constitute educational research, standards for judging the adequacy of research vary widely. In 1984, the authors of *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, the Commission on Reading of the National Academy of Education, reviewed theory and research in psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology, and child development. They concluded that this literature supported writing's contribution to more effective reading, as well as to its importance in its own right.[51] What was most encouraging to supporters of writing instruction was the new research on the processes and components of writing. This was a departure from the focus of the 1920s, for example, when studies investigated length of sentences, ratio of complete to incomplete sentences, numbers of words written in relation to extent of different words, and similar matters.[52] Like other English language educators over the decades, June Birnbaum thought that "despite a surge of interest in the relationship of reading and writing, in-depth study has only begun." Yet, in her opinion, teachers and researchers should go ahead and take important strides in "rejoining the naturally related processes of reading and writing."[53]

By the 1980s, theory-building was also making new connections between the processes of writing and reading. Once again it was noted that readers write (in making marginal notes or preparing outlines or precis, for example) and that writers must read (their own notes and drafts and, often, some other resources). More original, however, were descriptions of reading itself as a composing activity: comprehension is an act of constructing meaning, and one that can be made more effective by the understanding of such elements of the writing process as planning, drafting, and revising.[54] The earliest writings of young children were becoming dignified as researchers studied "invented spellings" and "story grammar." Such study offered more possibilities of "unifying the acquisition of writing and reading skills" in the early grades.[55] Integration in the high

schools depended on other insights. If educators were again optimistic, this time, perhaps, the integrated English language curriculum, sought almost from the first appearance of English as a school and college subject, might be finally achieved.

THE EMERGENCE OF ENGLISH AS A CURRICULUM SUBJECT

The history of Anglo-American education is littered with references to English. One was to the *"good English education"* espoused by reformers of various stripe, from Puritan and Presbyterian dissenters in the Mother Country to the utilitarian Benjamin Franklin, all of whom established English-language academies as alternatives to the Latin Grammar Schools. Another reference was to the *"common English education"* that dominated the "common branches"--Reading, 'Riting, and 'Rithmetic--of the prototypical eight-year 19th-century American public school. Yet another was to the *"English Course"* of the later 19th- and early 20th-century high school and college; at first a suspect alternative to the "Classical Course" (Latin and Greek required) and the "Scientific Course" (substituting German for Greek) the English course eventually triumphed. Still, the staying-power of the classics is indicated by the 1902 survey of the United States Commissioner of Education, which showed more high school students studying Latin than English.[56]

By the early 20th century, English clearly dominated the elementary school curriculum, largely in the form of instruction in reading. English subsequently became the most required subject in the secondary school. Through the cycles of relaxations and tightenings of academic discipline that have marked this century, English requirements for (and in) the college and university have consistently fared better than requirements in science, mathematics, and foreign languages. Yet, for all its prominence, for being a shared experience of millions of Americans, the meaning of "school English" still confuses the public and, perhaps, some professionals.[57] It is clearly one of the "solids" of the modern high school, but is it a "skills" subject or a "content" subject? If it is the former, how is the responsibility for its development to be divided between the English Department and all those other faculty who teach it? If it is both skill and content, which aspect is to predominate? Is it grammar and spelling? What about handwriting? Literature? "Creative writing"? In part the confusion stems from the fact that English has not ordinarily been experienced as a unified school subject, and schooled-Americans have received uneven portions of its diverse elements. This itself reflects the several streams which fed into the new subject of English--a subject which emerged in the United States as a discrete, if not unified, entity only in the later 19th century.

A Gathering of Many Traditions

The history of English as a school subject is entangled in the Protestant Reformation, the rise of the nation state, colonialism, the invention of printing, and the emergence of modern science. (This was also true, of course, of the study of other "vernacular" languages: of French in France, German in Germany, Italian in Italy--each having to nudge out Latin and Greek as the objects of a "real" school or university education.[58] Suffice it to say here, of the United States, that by the early 19th century, the time in which the "common" (public) school was spreading out of New England on its way to vanquishing most other approaches to making children literate, three facts were most pertinent. First, the basic elements of an English education--the

abilities to read and write English--were accepted as a necessary standard for all white Americans, both boys and girls. Second, a body of American writing, much of it patriotic utterances associated with the American Revolution, had been packaged into books for children, beginning a corpus of American literature and history that children were increasingly required to study. Third, declaring America's cultural independence, Noah Webster was creating school spellers and dictionaries of American English; these would standardize orthography, limit variations in pronunciation, set standards of "correct usage," and provide additional English content for the curriculum.[59]

There was still, of course, a great deal of tinkering and packaging to do, especially to define and redefine what it meant to "read" and to "write" English. For generations many teachers and parents were content with reading defined operationally as the ability to say the words aloud, and they were especially impressed when practice resulted in memorized recitations of prose and poetry; wide, silent reading had little popular appeal in schools. The meaning of the ability to write was even more unclear and slow to develop, in large measure because less time was given to writing. In everyone's mind, writing meant the ability to sign one's name. This was the first, and for centuries the only, writing task that people had striven to master; one's name remains, for many children, the first word one writes and reads, although not necessarily the first word one sees. Writing also meant penmanship. For the colonial and early national periods most of the entries for "writing" in Lawrence Cremin's masterful histories refer to penmanship and signing; there is no entry for "composition" in his first volume and few references in the second.[60]

Writing was coming to mean more, however. Nineteenth-century rural and urban schools gave children ample practice in writing short contracts, invoices, and receipts; how much youngsters learned to compose these, rather than to copy and master by rote teacher-provided models, is difficult to judge with certainty. Then, as later, student writing apparently existed to display penmanship or knowledge, not ideas. Those older children who remained longer in school wrote letters and essays, often doing little beyond copying models. Yet, functional literacy--in the forms of personal and business correspondence, diaries, and autobiographies--has left its traces in the millions of pieces of manuscripts to be found in libraries and personal collections. But we simply do not know how typical was schoolmaster George Moore of Grantham, New Hampshire, who wrote in his diary on December 25, 1828 (a regular school day), "[I] Informed scholars for the first time that *compositions* would be required of them weekly."[61] Nor do we know what Moore meant by "compositions."

Twentieth-century concepts of composition writing appear surprisingly early. For example, in his 1749 proposals for an English School in Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin specified that all the students (adolescent boys) "should be taught to write a *fair Hand,* and swift, as that is useful to All," be taught the English language by Grammar, and more:

> To form their Stile they should be put to writing Letters to each other, making Abstracts of what they read; or writing the same Things in their own Words: telling or writing Stories lately read, in their own Expressions. All to be revised and corrected by the Tutor, who should give his Reasons, and explain the Force and Import of Words, &c.
>
> To form their Pronunciation, they may be put on making Declamations, repeating Speeches, delivering Orations, &c. The Tutor assisting at the Rehearsals, teaching, advising, correcting their Accent, &c.[62]

English academies like Franklin's embodied a new hybrid: a modern core of English, certain other practical studies, and grammar and rhetoric, borrowed from the colleges. The methods being used elsewhere to teach Latin grammar were, however, transferred to the teaching of English. Pupils learned pages of rules that described Latin rather than English grammar and parsed sentences by Latin methods.[63]

The perennially fragmented character of later English education owes something to the fact that schools like Franklin's introduced new elements to add to the several other distinct educational traditions that were merged to form school English by 1900. Reading, the most likely language skill after speech and signing to be learned at home, represents a tradition of literacy in the native language that was becoming a universal requirement for participation in modern society. The teaching of writing, as handwriting, had once been a monopoly of scribes--whose chief function before the days of printing had been to preserve learning by copying and illustrating manuscripts. The Church long enforced prohibitions against scribes teaching reading and schoolmasters teaching writing. This distinction collapsed, however, under the influence of the Reformation, the spread of printed books, the growth of commerce. It became common, in England and later in North America, to find schools and teachers offering both writing and reading instruction, as well as schools which remained specialized.[64]

Still, as late as 1800, reading and writing had different utilities--reading motivated chiefly by religious and, later, political pressures, writing by economic change. As a sign of this, handwriting exercises were far more likely to be found in a textbook along with arithmetic (which also had commercial value) than to be included in reading books. Writing and reading had different constituencies; women were, for example, thought not to need writing even after they were permitted reading. It is not surprising therefore that, before approximately 1830, many teachers of beginning reading were women, but teachers of penmanship (scriveners), of more advanced English subjects, and of ciphering were almost always men. Further, given the tradition of being taught by different teachers, writing and reading were commonly learned at different ages: learning to read as young children, learning to write later, if at all.

Examples of this fragmentation are revealed in many accounts which have survived to the present. Like countless others, John Griscom (1774-1852), a native of New Jersey, was sent for short periods to several schools by his father, a literate saddle and harness-maker. One schoolmaster taught him spelling and another how to compose letters to his parents. Still, at age 17, he began teaching school himself, without much knowledge of grammar; further, although "Twas certain I could write, and cipher too,--but in reality, as to my penmanship, . . . it was very awkward and clumsy, for I had never had a teacher who had inspired me with any ambition to acquire a good hand."[65] Through much of the 19th century, American adolescents and adults who had never attended school or who had left before mastering writing answered the advertisements of writing teachers or subscribed to a few weeks of instruction in "writing schools" offered by itinerant teachers. Susan Grant warned a younger brother in 1841: "Do not think it is a matter of little consequence *how* you write, for many a young man has lost a chance for a good clerkship, because he was a poor writer."[66] How much their improvement in handwriting came through composing rather than copying and how much their better handwriting caused them to produce more writing is hard to determine. We do know that, as late as the 1870 Census, those claiming reading literacy were 50% more numerous than those professing any ability to write.[67]

Influences from the Education of Elites

In 1895, after surveying a number of American colleges and universities, the editor of a prominent national magazine, *The Dial*, concluded that it had established "beyond question the claims of English as a proper subject of university study."[68] The classical secondary schools and the colleges and universities of Europe and North America had long had their own language studies, notably Latin and Greek grammar and rhetoric; these subjects had been the preserve of elites in the Church, learned professions, and gentry. Since the Renaissance those of scholarly disposition among the upper classes had studied and practiced the principles of oral and written expression in the ancient languages. By the 19th century, however, American colleges were being visited by the same modernizing forces that had already made English language studies a popular alternative to the study of ancient languages in secondary schools. Rhetoric and oratory (using English texts), a Latinized English grammar, philology, and, more gradually, English literary history were appearing in the curriculum as alternatives to the Greek etymology, Hebrew grammar, and practice in Chaldee found in the curriculum of the colonial colleges.

The pathway to this change was initially broken by the literary societies that students formed, more than by adventuresome professors. In these societies, the members read modern literature that they collected in their own society libraries, wrote and criticized one another's essays, and prepared and performed orations for their members and for other societies.[69] The practice received in writing declamations and delivering "Class Day" and commencement addresses benefited the aspiring ministers and lawyers who predominated among American college students. But America was becoming daily less an oral and more a print culture. As one historian puts it, "Decision making in business and government was more and more to rely on the impersonal printed word, rather than face-to-face contact."[70]

Before 1900, most American colleges began instituting courses in composition for freshmen. Even small local colleges, like Beloit for men and Rockford for women in Illinois, moved composition from fortnightly or Saturday exercises to a 9-credit requirement.[71] The larger, ambitious institutions embarked on a process of faculty and curriculum specialization that, in the 20th century, would place oratory in a speech department, poetry in an English department, and make freshman composition a de facto course in technical writing for the aspiring businessman. Practice in writing was associated with the requirements of business, professional, or social life.[72] This very usefulness of writing made it less prestigious, however, than literature was coming to be; literature was to be studied as an "end in itself." In 1900, after it converted to a fully-elective system, Harvard's sole prescribed course was freshman composition.[73] This was not because composition was valued, in its own terms, but because it was *not*; that which was valued was made "elective," something for the discriminating student.[74]

The universities' changing values influenced the high schools. In a period when individual colleges set examinations to determine who was eligible to enroll, rather than using a diploma from an accredited high school or a standardized external examination like the College Boards, college entrance requirements told the high school faculty what to emphasize. In 1819, Princeton College had asked applicants for "acquaintance" with the Latinate English grammar and, in 1870, for demonstration of the ability to write a "short and simple English composition"; other colleges followed suit. In 1874, Harvard College's specification went still further by linking composition to specific literary texts. Candidates for admission were to "write a short English Composition, correct in spelling,

punctuation, grammar, and expression, the subject to be taken from such works of standard authors as shall be announced from time to time."[75] Other colleges developed their own lists, and the resulting chaos eventually led, in 1893, to a voluntary Conference on Uniform Entrance Requirements in English. Literature was enhanced as a school subject in the process. These events moved the high schools and colleges toward a stable literary canon. There were serious drawbacks, however, in this new marriage of literature and composition: literature was frequently manhandled in order to furnish a subject for teaching composition, while composition became hedged in; the results were stilted literary essays.[76] In 1893, Harvard established a Committee on Composition and Rhetoric which concluded that its students were lamentable writers, a criticism that would be periodically echoed in subsequent decades.

An earlier effort to reform composition had come in the 1830s and '40s when educational leaders like Horace Mann objected to rote learning of grammar and pressed for teaching methods that ensured understanding of rules, models, and definitions. Teachers were urged to ensure that pupils could apply grammatical rules in composing sentences and essays. These reforms did eventually produce more of what was then called "consecutive writing." In 1913, Franklin T. Baker could report some progress:

> Within the past twenty-five years the art of composition has assumed far greater importance than before. . . . It is now usual to find composition given a large share of the time of the program, and taught as a vital subject rather than in the occasional and perfunctory fashion of former days. It is now recognized as a subject of the greatest utility, inasmuch as every one depends for his pleasure and success in part upon his ability to express his ideas agreeably and effectively. It conduces to clearness and definiteness in one's thoughts, to care in ordering and expressing them. To have tried conscientiously to say things well helps in the appreciation of things well said, and therefore adds to the enjoyment of literature. And command of one's native speech puts one into closer touch with the social and national life about him.
>
> Especially noteworthy are the changes in the methods of instruction. . . . The earlier teaching aimed at a sort of lifeless accuracy. Verbal and grammatical correctness, propriety in spelling and punctuation were sufficient. The present-day teaching of the better sort judges the child's efforts not only for these things, but for the interest and general effectiveness of the whole composition.[77]

Although Baker's assessment overstated both the progress made and the bright prospects ahead, if judged relatively school writing had indeed progressed. And, while Baker's language and references are rooted in the social and pedagogical temper of the early progressive era, modern teachers and theorists of writing will find concepts there they can endorse.

Something of a backdrop has now been established for a consideration of those social, cultural, political, and economic developments which appear to explain both the constancy and the pressures for change in English education. That their influence was not limited to this part of the school curriculum will also be obvious to the reader.

THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF SCHOOLING

The political decisions to ensure the schooling of all the children of all of the people began in the 19th century. By 1900, the states of the United States, each sovereign with respect to education, had each taken some or all of the following actions: establishing provisions for voters to found and maintain local public schools, supplementing locally-raised funds with state monies, making public schools free, setting minimum standards for schoolhouses, broadening curriculum, approving textbooks, addressing teacher education and selection, and enacting and enforcing compulsory school attendance laws. The Northeast had gone the farthest and the South and rural states generally lagged. But so widespread and successful were these policies that about 90% of the nation's school children were in public schools before the turn of the century. Public school students included the majority of those whose parents could have paid for private schooling and would have done so in earlier eras. The children of immigrants were similarly drawn into this system of universal education, some in Catholic or Lutheran school systems, the majority in the public system. America's major racial minorities--Blacks, Native Americans, and Mexican Americans--were also receiving public schooling, but often in inferior schools, almost always under deliberate policies of segregation, and with less regularity and longevity of attendance given prevailing educational discrimination and social prejudice.

The High School: The "People's College"

The public high school appeared in some cities before the Civil War and had spread by 1880 to enroll most secondary school students, dooming the private academy and seminary to virtual extinction; yet, it educated a small fraction of all school children before 1920. Most youngsters left school at the end of the eighth grade or earlier, drawn into the labor market by the availability of unskilled jobs or repelled by the mandatory entrance examinations and academic classicalism of the high school curriculum. In 1890, only 6.7% of youngsters aged 14 to 17 were attending secondary schools; the majority of the graduates were girls, some planning to become teachers; many of the rest, boys and girls, were headed for the still-more elite institution of the college or university. Yet, the processes of social, economic, and political change that had created universal elementary schooling were already evident, and they would eventually spread and democratize secondary education as well.[78] Rising standards of living in the American population generally and status-striving in the growing middle class attracted progressively more children to high schools. Heavy immigration, technological change, and the campaigns of social reformers and organized labor were also constricting employment opportunities for youth, especially for those under age 15 or so. Academic qualifications for high school admission gradually disappeared, except for a handful of selective examination high schools. Increasingly, one was promoted to high school as one was promoted from grade to grade: on the basis of age.

In 1930 half the youngsters aged 14 to 16 were in high school; by 1940 the proportion was two-thirds. Despite high attrition before graduation, status-conscious and subject matter-oriented high schools had to deal with the consequences of becoming institutions of universal instruction. To relieve some of the pressure, high schools adopted alternative curricula to the college-oriented academic course--trade and commercial education, home economics, and finally the general track that eventually came to enroll most students. They also instituted ability-grouping. The extra-curriculum, relaxed disciplinary standards, and a more informal climate were accommodations of the

system to the social and intellectual diversity of an often restive clientele. Students who were not book-minded had been "frozen out, as early as possible" in the old days, recalled one educator in 1940; now "we reduce the amount of book and language activity in the school to the minimum at which we can keep our self-respect."[79] In 1956, by which time the majority of students persisted to graduation, the NCTE Commission on the secondary English Curriculum was forced to consider literature in reference to the needs of wildly diverse students and even to give attention to reading instruction:

> Improvement of reading in the secondary school has in recent years become the common concern of all teachers. Conditions of life in the mid-twentieth century place increasing demands upon every individual to be able to read intelligently. More and more pupils in the lower ranges of ability are now in high school. Research has revealed the complex nature of reading and the necessity for adapting skills learned in the early grades to the more mature tasks of the high school. This challenge is being met by recognizing the need for both a developmental and a remedial program. . . .[80]

The position of NCTE reflected official opinion favoring a holistic approach to English language education, a strategy rooted in pupil experience. This movement paralleled the popularization of the high school. As part of the American response to the launching of the Soviet Sputnik in 1957, however, NCTE's Conference on Basic Issues in the Teaching of English retreated; it endorsed more formal, book-centered teaching styles and more traditional curriculum units--in line with the public outcry, Congressional alarm, and the rush of academic disciplines to get on the bandwagon to save "the American way of life." The majority of NCTE Conference members represented Eastern colleges and preparatory schools, or those with classical leanings.[81] Heavier university influence on the theory of English education also came through the Modern Language Association and the Commission on English of the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB). However, CEEB, through its 1965 report *Freedom and Discipline*, tried to compromise. In its report, CEEB acknowledged both children's experience-based mastery of English grammar (which was attested to by linguists) and the obligations of English teachers and professors to maintain standards of usage. While formed "to propose standards of achievement for college preparatory students and to suggest ways of meeting them," CEEB stated that its efforts, "though aimed at one group, are intended to influence all tracks and all levels."[82] Thus, by the mid-'60s, American secondary education seemed to be returning to its older, college-oriented posture.

From "Uniform Lists" for the Few to Experience for the Many

It had been reaction against college influence (some said "domination") over the curriculum and pedagogy of the high school that led in 1911 to the formation of a professional body, The National Council of Teachers of English. The organization's first target was the hold on high schools exerted by the 1894 recommendations of the National Education Association's Committee of Ten, a body chaired by Harvard University's president, Charles W. Eliot. University spokesmen had been gratified by an increase of students wishing to prepare themselves in college for the new opportunities in the professions, science, technology, and business. But the Committee of Ten reflected collegiate unease given the less aristocratic backgrounds and weaker academic motivations of their new students, many of them products of public high schools rather than of academies run by the elite colleges' own graduates; the private sector's share

had gone down from preparing 32% of college students in 1890 to a mere 7% in 1930. By setting uniform college entrance requirements and issuing pronouncements, the colleges tried to improve English education in the high schools by promoting the analysis of English literary classics through required lists, and focusing teachers' concentration upon correctness in spelling, grammar, and handwriting in student essays and on proper usage and delivery in their oral utterances.

The rebuttal to the effects of the Committee of Ten came in 1917. Another committee, differently constituted, issued a ringing challenge: "After more than half a century of struggle, the public high school has definitely established itself as a continuation of common-school education, as a finishing school (in the good sense of that term) rather than as a fitting school. . . . "[83] This "Declaration of Independence" from the colleges was the report of the joint committee of the National Council of Teachers of English and the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education of the National Education Association. Unlike the Conference on English of the Committee of Ten--seven professors and three schoolmen--this body was dominated by representatives of schools and chaired by James F. Hosic. The Committee's 1917 *Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools* concluded that the demands of college preparation created "monotonous and unintelligent uniformity in the secondary schools."[84] Hosic, professor of English at Chicago Teachers College, summarized the new orientation intended for the high school: "The chief problem of articulation is not how to connect the high school and the college but now to connect the high school with the elementary school."[85] High schools were urged to develop students' faculties of sensitivity, thinking, and interpretation; to enrich their imaginative lives; to stress appreciation and enjoyment in reading; to view learning in instrumental terms as promoting socially-responsible, well-rounded lives.

The spirit of the new science of child development and the confidence of the progressive era in rational reform and social adjustment were evident in this report, which was the first comprehensive curriculum statement in the history of English language instruction in the United States. The Committee believed that the articulation of writing and reading were mandated by the social nature of language, as well as by psychological principles:

> The chief function of language is communication. Hence . . . the pupil must speak or write to or for somebody, with a consciously conceived purpose to inform, convince, inspire, or entertain. The English course should be so arranged as to couple speaking and writing for practical purposes with reading of the same character, and speaking and writing for pleasure and inspiration with the study of the novelists, the playwrights, and the poets.[86]

While the report did not repudiate prevailing recommendations in literature, it envisioned a broadened curriculum and greater choice. Although the influence of the Hosic report was uneven, certain practices did become commonplace: writing assignments freed from literary themes; extensive and even "free" reading; the use of magazines and newspapers to engage reluctant readers and to connect school to life; and providing practice in language skills associated with student government, drama, assemblies, and school publications.

Some of the distinctions between elementary and secondary education were indeed breaking down, as were those between reading and literature, creative and functional writing, oral and written language. The concept of *language arts* made common cause

with the philosophical attack, by John Dewey, upon all dualisms: mind vs. body, individual vs. society, art vs. science, subject matter vs. life, knowledge vs. skills--even text vs. reader or writer vs. reader.

The 1920s and 1930s introduced other challenges to old pieties, in the forms of Freudian and gestalt psychology. New NCTE committees and commissions published two works which endorsed the "sturdy common sense and vigorous statements" of Hosic's report.[87] Both the 1935 *An Experience Curriculum in English* and the 1939 *Conducting Experiences in English* emphasized pupils' prior knowledge and interests as the starting point, and promoted "experience" as the organizational principle of curriculum and teaching from kindergarten through graduate school.[88] Experience was an antidote to the fragmenting effects of specialization and the elective system. "The cause of the malady is the artificial separation of one subject from another, and, even more potently, the divorce of all school study and drill from dynamic experience."[89] We must present students with a "carefully integrated curriculum so taught that the connection of each subject with every other subject and with the whole of life will be unmistakable," declared another NCTE committee, in *A Correlated Curriculum.*[90] But it was premature for that committee to conclude that "the day of educational segments is definitely done."[91] While elementary schools were more susceptible to such reforms, for reasons to be discussed later, many teachers in primary and even more in secondary schools adhered to traditional schedules, textbooks, and assignments, drilled students on grammar, and religiously compartmentalized their teaching of English. Moreover, when teachers succumbed to the ideology of experience as a basis of writing, was it often, as Robert Connors claims, because such essays are easier for the overworked teacher to read?[92]

The Popularization of the College and New Questions About Standards

Higher education was itself slowly changing after 1900. It was becoming increasingly specialized in its curricula and faculty. The faculty, many with doctorates in sub-fields of the disciplines, were less able to agree on the "essentials" of a collegiate education and, hence, tended to relax requirements altogether for undergraduates. Conservatives charged that the universities, and even many so-called liberal arts colleges, were more responsive to explicitly "utilitarian" than to liberal and cultural values. Yielding to expediency, early in the century the colleges abandoned their own entrance examinations in favor of admitting students on the basis of class standing and graduation from accredited high schools. As high schools proliferated and became increasingly diverse in their products, the more selective colleges also began using nationally standardized scholastic aptitude tests to provide a supplementary screen. Entrance requirements were also loosening. In 1894 the president of Bowdoin College insisted that "Latin is the Thermopylae where the modern Greeks must take their stand, determined to withstand the Barbarians or perish in the attempt."[93] Latin perished, however. Between 1915 and 1965, the percentage of high school students studying Latin went from 37% to 1%. A significant indicator of the capitulation to modernism was the decision of that bastion of academic conservatism, Yale University, to drop Latin as an admissions requirement in 1919. The modern foreign languages also fared poorly. The very large high school enrollments in German collapsed during World War I and never recouped; the Romance languages failed to pick up much of the slack. In 1950, fewer than a quarter of high school students studied any foreign language. As a consequence of these several actions--the elimination of the composition requirement along with college admissions tests, the general decline in language studies, the capitulation to the

principle of electives--there is reason to believe that writing and language study declined relative to literature and oral language, and that English generally competed less well with other school subjects and activities despite the colleges' retention of English as an entrance requirement.

The "G.I. Bill of Rights" (Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944) began the real rush of Americans to colleges and universities, however. Tertiary education, which had enrolled 3.9% of the age group in 1900, attracted 33.9% by 1960. Fearful of rising competition for clean and secure jobs, Depression- reared parents increasingly encouraged their children to plan for college, and wondered aloud whether the high schools provided an adequate preparation for the youth who were the first in their families to attempt higher education. Socially prestigious institutions, like Harvard and Stanford, raised their entrance requirements to become academically as well as socially elite; so did the stronger public universities. For the first time, non-selective state, private, and junior colleges faced much of the range of student abilities and interests encountered in the comprehensive high school. Remedial reading and writing courses served many college students. The Council for Basic Education, founded in 1956, lambasted progressivism and "life adjustment" education for having debased the curriculum and academic standards of public schools.

In the loud reaction against a half-century of often-timid educational "reform," English education was not exempt. Critics singled out the "word method" of teaching reading, high school units in talking-on-the-telephone and writing-thank-you-notes, and college majors in "communications." While business and industry claimed that their production and service employees could not read adequately, management trainees were faulted for their inability to write well. The academic elite got particular attention from the critics in the years 1950 to 1965. The Advanced Placement Program was inaugurated by the College Board in 1952, for "secondary school students who are capable of doing college-level work" and for high schools "interested in giving such students the chance to work up to capacity."[94] In his widely-cited 1959 report, *The American High School Today*, James B. Conant advocated two reform strategies: (a) enlarging small high schools so that broad and challenging programs of general, vocational, and academic classes would be available to all and (b) instituting more demanding courses and requirements for the 15-20% of the age group who are academically talented. He thought both strategies were consistent with America's democratic ideals.[95]

For a long time, to many Americans "democracy" in education meant the chance for their children to climb the social and economic ladder of success. "Good usage" in language had long been an important social marker. It functioned to set the educated and "cultivated" apart and provided a standard against which to measure the acceptability of the upwardly mobile. With the establishment and formalization of English studies around the turn of the century, the educated American was subjected, through the study of the written and oral language, to "a certain version of the native language, a version that tended to coincide with the dialect of the upper middle class, the group that had customarily attended college." After about 1870 in the United States, in the words of James Berlin, "Composition teachers became the caretakers of the English tongue, and more important, the gatekeepers on the road to the good things in life, as defined by the professional class."[96] Rhetoric's traditional emphasis upon persuasion and analysis was transformed into "a narrow concern for convention," a "stultifying hunt" by the composition teacher for students' errors in the mechanics of writing.[97] Efforts to reduce this orientation had limited success, however. And, given the renewed emphasis of the 1950s and early '60s upon correctness and the elimination of errors in writing or speech, attempts to integrate writing and reading were a distraction at best.

After 1950, the civil rights movement and affirmative action programs added their own complications. In the long tradition of joining the advantaged by emulating them, some speakers of non-standard English certainly wanted such corrective attention by the gatekeepers. But the more militant (white, brown, and black) have argued more forcefully in recent times that "Black is Beautiful" and that retention of one's native language and culture is more important than melting into the mainstream. Linguists endorsed the rule-governed character of non-standard dialects; the "disadvantaged," they pointed out, came to school "completely fluent (like all human beings of their age)" and teachers' claims about their linguistic incompetence were called ill-informed.[98] In the universities, ethnic studies (and women's studies) departments also challenged once-entrenched values and ideas of what is truth and beauty.

Two other manifestations of the latter-day democratization of American schooling bear on the issues of the relative status and relationship of writing and reading. Bilingual education has not yet proven to be a friendly environment for writing. With rare exceptions[99] the overwhelming emphasis is on oral language competence, with a secondary focus on the reading of English. Writing, when it goes beyond mere copying, is often confined to teachers asking students to make sentences using words written on the blackboard; this leads to mechanical, formulaic products: *table*: "The table is big."; *flower*: "The flower is big."; *pen*: "The pen is not big." Students are seldom asked to write anything generative of more than two or three sentences. Bilingual classes provide even less writing opportunities than do those for native English speakers where the readers, workbooks, and teachers' manuals persist in suggesting limited writing activities: underlining, circling, numbering in sequence, filling one-word blanks.[100]

The Right to Read program, a large federally-funded attack on functional illiteracy announced in 1969, represented the shift, however short-lived, from concern with excellence to that of promoting equity.[101] In proposing a national strategy for attacking the reading problem, the authors of the 1975 *Toward a Literate Society* wrote that it would be tragic and counterproductive if so much attention were given to the teaching of reading that writing and other language skills were slighted.[102] This happened, however. Like standards for minimum competencies, the decided emphasis was upon reading skills. "Right to Read" also perpetuated isolation, as do categorical programs in general, since program leaders are fearful of their funding if they lose their "identity" by attempting to attack more than one problem at a time. Such single-issue campaigns support the fragmentation and specialization that have moved through society, only now and then challenged or checked.

THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF EDUCATORS

Professionalization is a major product of the linked advances of technological change, occupational differentiation, and formal education.[103] It fosters the development and aggrandizement of distinctive *subcultures* of like-minded interest groups. In education, subcultures divide teachers from administrators, and both of them from university professors and educational researchers. Subcultures divide elementary from secondary teachers, English teachers from other teachers, writing teachers and *their* specialists from reading teachers and *their* specialists. They even separate the faculties of English departments in the colleges: the lower-status faculty who teach composition are kept at arm's length by the "regular faculty," whom Thomas Newkirk calls the "mandarinate that looked upon us with such disdain."[104] Professional subcultures are defined and maintained by the professional educations of their members,

their disciplinary or work orientations, their organizations, and their publications. Textbooks and allied materials, examinations, and the research corpora perpetuate the divisions between teachers of the different fields and levels of schooling.

The Education and Socialization of Teachers

In the last century much has changed in the institutional arrangements for teacher education. The normal schools and state teachers colleges that once educated the majority of elementary school teachers have disappeared or been transformed into multipurpose colleges and universities. Elementary teachers, like their high school counterparts, are now college graduates. This convergence of experiences should not obscure, however, persisting differences in the recruitment, socialization, and professional education existing among America's teachers. The self-contained classroom has tended to attract persons to elementary teaching whose interests are not, or do not remain, subject-specific. To the high school English teachers who would say, "I teach English," they would reply, "I teach children." Their training and socialization almost always differs accordingly, even when the elementary school teacher majored in English. Because of the great emphasis placed on reading instruction, the elementary teacher is pulled by professional training and by the school culture to stress reading; writing suffers accordingly. The colleges have not helped to redress the balance, for composition enjoys low status among English department faculty, and this "menial task" is often assigned to junior or temporary staff. Various studies show many elementary school teachers have had no instruction in writing beyond freshman composition.[105]

This same disdain for composition has afflicted English majors generally, as their professors pursued more elevated interests in literary history or the New Criticism. Composition was associated, in their minds, with secondary or remedial education, with requirements, with practical skills--not with "thinking," specialization, or "culture."[106] Hence English majors planning to teach English were steeped in literature and sometimes little else, ill-prepared to give either basic reading or writing instruction. Thus, the professional interests of university English faculty have superceded the needs of future teachers and their students, as they have of English students generally.[107] Thomas Newkirk tells of the "uproar" that ensued in 1975, after two professors submitted a resolution that all regular members of the English Department faculty at the University of Texas be required to teach at least one section of freshman composition every three semesters.[108] In 1961, at a time when James B. Conant was recommending that half of high school English time be given to composition, the NCTE Committee on the National Interest reported that 60% of English majors were not required to take any advanced composition.[109] Neither the earlier emphasis upon historical knowledge of literature nor the New Criticism have satisfied those educational reformers who espouse teaching responsive reading and expressive writing in the elementary and secondary schools.

Nor, as James Moffett points out, are many professors in other subjects interested in teaching writing; they view student writing primarily as a vehicle to test whether their assigned reading was done.[110] It should not be surprising, therefore, that the guidelines for teacher certification in English drafted in 1965 by the Modern Language Association, NCTE, and the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education preserved "the traditional divisions of English into language, literature, and composition. . . ."[111] Reports during the 1960s on the further education of teachers were equally discouraging; teachers averaged 0.4 semester hours in composition and 0.7 in language during nine years of teaching.[112]

The foregoing are in addition to other criticisms of the preparation of those who became English teachers: the attraction of English programs for college students who drift into the field by reason of having no clear direction or because of a liking to read or for failing elsewhere. "It is unfortunately true that a great many English teachers have failed to demonstrate that they are genuinely expert and deserve the consideration due someone who is professionally competent in his field," wrote a Project English participant.[113]

The Different Worlds of the Elementary and High School

In 1952, in one of history's many over-optimistic projections of trends toward linking the language arts, NCTE's Commission on the Curriculum thought it observed progress at all three levels: in elementary school units that sprang from normal language integration, rather than 20 minute segments on language, spelling, and composition; in secondary schools that abandoned semester courses segregating reading and literature from oral and written expression; and in college courses in communications.[114] The same Commission, in its 1956 *The English Language Arts in the Secondary School*, described courses that concentrated upon only one of the language arts as being remedial programs for retarded students or enrichment courses for superior students; the "normal" course, it maintained, was integrated.[115] But, as the Hatfield Commission had observed 20 years before, the correlation of reading with other language activities and with the rest of the curriculum is structurally easier for the elementary than for the secondary teacher. The division of the school day into periods of equal length and the organization of the schools into functional responsibility according to "disciplines" promotes fragmentation and makes it improbable that "teachers of all subjects should be, to some extent, teachers of English."[116] And composition suffers most when teachers have more than 100 students daily, as NCTE has repeatedly warned.[117]

A critical difference between elementary and secondary teachers is that the former must be *generalists*. This helps explain the great dependence of elementary school teachers on basal reading series and their teachers' manuals; a 1979 survey found that 95% rely on them.[118] Esmor Jones of Britain's National Association for the Teaching of English noted the enormous difficulty of interesting primary teachers in his organization: "It is much easier to interest the specialist English teacher in a 'subject' association than it is to interest the teacher who spends only a part of his time teaching English."[119] In reporting on professional English associations in the United States at the 1965 International Conference on the Teaching of English, Ralph Staiger neglected to mention his own International Reading Association, probably because most of its members, though not generalists, were concerned with elementary education.[120] In 1924 a new journal, *The Elementary English Review* (now *Language Arts*), was founded in the belief that NCTE did not serve the interests of those who taught or studied English in the elementary schools, that interest in the education of young children "was unorganized, lacking a nucleus and a means of expression."[121] Thus, English teachers became even more organizationally divided, in part, by the level at which they teach. While observers sometimes acknowledged the arbitrariness of these divisions and proposed greater communication between levels, their members clung to them because they truly represented natural communities of interest related to the sociology of their work.

This fact is vitally important in understanding schooling and its resistance to change. George Henry, in 1986, reminded English educators that to understand this

teaching field requires "the fundamental probing of instruction, which lies not solely in overt, externally observed 'method' but also in the internalized arrangement of ideas, most of which are predetermined by the nature of the discipline or by the teacher's expectations of the nature of the discipline."[122] There are additional elements in the teacher's "conceptual structure," however, many of which distinguish elementary from secondary teachers (or, in high schools, teachers of general science or math from physics or algebra teachers). At the same time that they have more balls to juggle, elementary teachers (and high school teachers of "suspect" fields like reading) also have fewer sacred texts, fewer sacred rules, fewer sacred cows. Hence, one should expect different responses to external pressures, including those that come from "expert professional opinion." As I have argued elsewhere,

> Curriculum fields that enroll students, for instruction in introductory (elementary) level basic skills and knowledge, and that are taught by teachers with the most general academic credentials will be more susceptible to new theories and practices in pedagogy than other combinations of student, subject-matter, and teacher characteristics. . . . There is relatively less to be lost in opting for the uncertainty of change; there are relatively fewer privileges to protect. Lacking high scholastic status, such fields and their teachers may seek a second identity, perhaps the reputation of being pioneering, venturesome, creative, forward-looking. . . . Even if teaching universal and elementary subjects does not present more difficulties, these difficulties are at least more "public" and visible. This visibility can heighten a sense of dissatisfaction with the status quo. . . .[123]

It is not surprising, then, that in his 1984 attempt to reconstruct, historically, *How Teachers Taught*, Larry Cuban has found that elementary school teachers have consistently been the greater risk-takers.[124]

Teachers and Their Organizations

Professional associations collect persons with shared interests. As arenas for the exchange of information and assistance, including career advancement, they also serve to increase and reinforce in-group identity. Among college educators, the Modern Language Association is oriented toward literature and belletristic studies, leaving rhetoric and composition to the College Conference on Composition and Communication (The Four Cs) of NCTE. From 1911 to 1947, most teachers (and "experts") of writing and reading belonged to the same organization: the National Council of Teachers of English, and read the NCTE journals, *Elementary English* (from 1942 to 1975, now *Language Arts*), *English Journal*, and *Research in the Teaching of English*. In 1955, however, reading acquired *its* own organization, the International Reading Association (IRA), formed from the merger of two new, short-lived professional associations.

Janet Emig describes the break in the ranks of English teachers as beginning with the departure of a "disaffected" group of remedial reading teachers. There is certainly little reason to imagine that this ambitious specialization could have long remained content in NCTE; it lacked therein an adequate forum for sharing and publishing its concerns.[125] As one of the participants in founding the National Association of Remedial Teachers, Constance McCullough, later recalled, remedial reading was ambitious, ready to pass from being a parent's despair and a teacher's frustration to being the object of concerted efforts in the society as a whole.[126] Meanwhile, as the remedial teachers

were organizing, another group was forming among English educators. An organizational meeting of 34 persons centered around Temple University founded the International Council for the Improvement of Reading Instruction (ICIRI) in 1947; it had 200 members when it began publishing *The Reading Teacher* in 1951. "I Cry" merged with the young National Association of Remedial Teachers on January 1, 1955, forming the International Reading Association (IRA). The rapidly growing IRA purchased the *Journal of Developmental Reading* (now *Journal of Reading*) from its publishers, the English Department of Purdue University, in order to better attract and serve those concerned with secondary, college, and adult reading. By the 10th anniversary of the organization, the print orders for the two IRA journals were 39,000 and 9,000, respectively, and plans were afoot for a journal to serve scholars and researchers, *The Reading Research Quarterly*. By its 30th anniversary, IRA had 50,000 members, reflecting its popularity among elementary school teachers, reading specialists and supervisors, reading researchers, publishers, and clinicians. A 1969 survey discovered, however, that only 6% of IRA members were senior high school teachers; they already had *their* organization in NCTE.

IRA and NCTE have collaborated, of course. They jointly published a service bulletin, *Reading and Linguistics*. In 1980, when Yetta Goodman was president of NCTE and Kenneth Goodman of IRA, a practice was instituted of sponsoring sessions at one another's national and regional meetings. Such actions, however, will prove easier to effect than the larger objective in view: the uniting of writing and reading in teaching and research.

Remaking English

The disciplines that are available to researchers in contemporary English education include cognitive psychology, linguistics, child language development, artificial intelligence, brain study, semiotics, rhetoric, anthropology, literature, and philosophy. A major figure in the effort to reintegrate reading with the other language arts, Kenneth Goodman, characterized the research activity as multidisciplinary rather than interdisciplinary, however, since "there is little crossing over from discipline to discipline."[127] The relative insularity of English education scholars from those in other fields resembles the isolation of reading researchers, much the largest group, from those investigating other language areas. The "sociology of expertise" also affects instructional organization. Thus, the elementary school orientation of leaders in the field of reading has been used to explain why secondary school reading remains isolated from the content area classes, sometimes from English itself. The experience of reading experts promotes a view of reading "as a separate subject, with reading skills as the curriculum."[128] At the 1956 annual meeting of IRA, for example, Professor George Mallinson recommended an extension of the basal program in high school English and communications classes, something not calculated to appeal to many English teachers no matter how desperate they might feel about the challenges of teaching English.[129]

"English teaching is not a profession but a predicament," declared the College Board's Commission on English in 1965.[130] Albert Kitzhaber complained that "English in the schools has become less a curriculum than a receptacle; everything gets dumped into it."[131] The California State Department of Education reportedly accepted 217 courses as English.[132] The "identity crisis" of the "wastebasket" field of English was only intensified when other disciplines actively organized themselves, in the wake of the

Soviet Sputnik, to tap the resources of the federal government and various foundations for curriculum development. The professional pride of English educators was at issue, as well as the threat to its place in the curriculum as a result of the new mathematics, science, and foreign language curriculum packages, textbooks, and equipment. Under the influence of the psychological theories of Jerome Bruner, educators in English also began to talk of the "spiral curriculum," whereby previously taught skills and knowledge were reintroduced in cognitively more sophisticated forms. Like their counterparts in other fields, English educators discovered the "discovery method," whereby students learned the basic ideas that compose the "structure of the discipline." Linguistics and a new rhetoric were also enlisted in the 1960s' effort to reconsider and revive English as a field of knowledge.[133]

Project English, funded in 1961 by the United States Office of Education, created over 20 Curriculum Study and Demonstration Centers by 1966; Squire called them "without question the most influential developments in curriculum during recent years."[134] Some, like those programs in New Haven and at the Universities of Indiana and Nebraska and Carnegie Institute of Technology, tried to attend to the interrelations of literature, composition, and language; others were traditional, reflecting the wider educational conservatism of the period.[135] Through expansion of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), money was available to support teacher reeducation in reading, English, and other school subjects. Institutes were offered to elementary and secondary teachers of English, beginning in 1962 under sponsorship of the College Board and, then, through Project English and NDEA. They proved inadequate, however, to sustain curricular and pedagogical experimentation--including efforts to exploit the potentialities of writing and to relate writing to the other language arts. For one thing, not enough teachers were reached by the institutes; perhaps 20,000 enrolled at the height of the movement; this was only 20% of English teachers.[136] Another problem was that, despite the auspicious beginnings of Project English, English "reform" shared something of the general weaknesses of the other curriculum reforms of the 1960s: the institute programs and the curriculum packages were not conceived with adequate or sustained attention to the realities of the public schools, to the "culture" of the teaching profession, and to the needs and wishes of teachers.[137] In a few years, even among teachers who had attended the institutes, older teaching practices resurfaced.

TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

It is said of today's children that they "are as much immersed in written language as in speech."[138] This was not true in the 19th century. Breakfasts, for example, did not come out of "wordy" packages but out of chickens, cows, and your mother's oven; all were innocent of print. Yet already the revolution begun by Guttenberg had influenced society, causing literacy-- and, eventually, schools--to gain historically unprecedented influence over daily life. By the middle of the last century, Daniel Calhoun writes, even rural Americans experienced a "fluctuating equilibrium between two styles of life--between a communal, personalistic style that did not require literacy except in its leaders, and a commercial, captious argumentative style in which literacy was needed to maintain a standard of decision between men."[139] Literacy rates first became high precisely in those communities with market economies, and writing and arithmetic for economic ends joined reading for religious purposes in the expansion of schooling.[140] This helps to explain those 19th-century school exercises that children had in writing IOUs and invoices. The technology of print presented problems as well as opportunities for teachers and learners. Before print, the spelling of English words was governed by

pronunciation. After printing reached England, however, the spelling was fixed (a convenience to printers), and subsequent changes in pronunciation left many words with "irregular spellings" that had to be mastered by rote.[141] Newly standardized spelling also created the need for spelling books and lessons, fixing spelling in the school curriculum; for decades spelling received a considerable share of the school day, far more than it now enjoys.

A direct and immediate outcome of this new reliance on the written word was the appearance and proliferation of schoolbooks of all kinds. Their use replaced much of the oral methods and memorization that had been so prominent in both formal and informal education from the earliest recorded history of education. By the American centennial the growing system of schooling was also being subjected to calls for better management. The additional technologies of "objective" testing and rational management (bureaucracy) were becoming visible. The new profession of psychology offered a succession of theories about how to manage learning and assessment better. Finally, the isolation of generations of youngsters for increasingly long periods of time in institutions called schools and colleges started the elaboration of a youth culture, one that has become relatively autonomous of parents and teachers through the electronic media of communication and entertainment.

The Textbook Revolution

The revolutionary effects of the printing press could not be fully realized until wood pulp replaced rags in the production of paper. Until then, paper costs made books expensive and also discouraged casual writing. By the later 19th century, however, it was feasible for either parents or taxpayers to provide children with uniform textbooks, and writing paper in lieu of slates. Pencils and steel-tipped pens replaced the quills which earlier generations of schoolmasters had tediously sharpened, and whose use limited the writing assigned. Reading instruction was also freed to expand. In 1898, Charles W. Eliot had calculated that an entire six-year elementary school curriculum could be read in 46 hours; doing so little reading, it was small wonder that school-children could learn so much "by heart." Indeed, the popular children's magazine *Youth's Companion* contained more reading than an entire series of school reading books.[142] The 20th century added to the profusion of written materials, with graded textbooks, supplementary readers, anthologies, scholastic dictionaries and magazines, and workbooks. Next came paperbacks, to destroy the coherence of the English curriculum, or free it from the tyranny of the textbook--depending on one's point of view. James Squire has called this paperback revolution another version of the older pedagogical debate between intensive and extensive reading.[143]

Cheaper schoolbooks made it possible to group children more easily for instruction, another change from earlier patterns. For example, the state of Connecticut had discovered in 1846 that over 215 different texts were being used in its common schools.[144] The new technology changed that, making it possible that, when the teacher asked children to take out their reading or history books, they would all have the same book, rather than one brought from home that some distant ancestor had acquired or that some over-ambitious parent had selected to push his or her child ahead.[145] This removed a common grievance of earlier teachers. The complaint that a book was too simple or too difficult for a given student was answered by authoring multiple versions of the same "graded" text; all fifth graders could have a fifth reader, at some level of difficulty, sparing some students excessive pride and others shame--or so it was thought.

Schoolbooks continued to be criticized, however. Given the "lofty diction" of their texts--"every man became a mortal; a horse, a courser or a steed; a glass, a crystal vase; the moon, Pale Diana"--it was said that teachers were tempted to try to teach their students "to write like John Milton."[146] That criticism passed as the language of many schoolbooks was simplified to deal with mass education and with research that showed that relatively few words carried the bulk of the work of ordinary communication in language; "overlearning" the most frequently used words in English became the dominant pedagogical principle, at least in the elementary school years. More recently, the poor writing model that many secondary school textbooks present to students--through their trivial character, errors, and inconsistencies--caused Tierney to recommend that students become critics and editors of their textbooks, learning comprehension and meta-comprehension skills in the process.[147] The system of authorship and marketing of textbooks also tended to produce discrete texts for the several language arts, and this divisiveness is carried over into the construction of lessons. In so doing, textbook production has reinforced the language arts as separate entities, each to be studied in relative isolation "through its own text."

As far as writing is concerned, the use of skill-building workbooks is the product of the textbook revolution that comes in for sharpest attack. The reform that brought silent reading to the fore also led to elementary students spending considerable time in seat-work, completing workbooks and skill sheets, more time than they received in instruction from the teacher. These "independent" activities ordinarily make few demands on comprehension skills and produce little or no writing.[148] The authors of the 1985 *Breaking Ground: Teachers Relate Reading and Writing in the Elementary School* emphasize that writing process instruction "is incompatible with the philosophy behind reading worksheets, tests, basals," and the practice of subordinating workbooks to books.[149] Meanwhile, secondary students in the lower tracks sometimes find workbooks dominating their composition programs. They are part of what George Henry characterizes as the crude, efficiency-seeking scientism that has driven "imagination, feeling, and transcendence" from education.[150] Neither have the colleges been free from this tendency, as the composition handbooks testify.[151]

Testing

The commercially-prepared standardized tests and the state testing programs that are so familiar to writing and reading teachers have traditionally determined curriculum, book selection, and students' school and university placements in the United States much less than is true in Japan and western Europe.[152] The recent growth of state-mandated testing programs is, however, beginning to raise teachers' complaints of class time spent on "teaching for the test."

Despite an occasionally-expressed belief that advances in diagnostic testing procedures were promising, English teachers have consistently professed skepticism of such tests. Tests of literature and writing were late in being included in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the federally-supported attempt to create measures of the nation's "gross national educational product." Indeed, at the same time that standardized tests were being used for more purposes, writing teachers and researchers were experimenting with holistic assessment.

The assessment of writing achievement remains a particularly thorny issue. The latest edition of *Handbook of Research on Teaching* does not even talk about testing, as

conventionally understood.[153] Composition scales appeared before 1915 but were dismissed as unreliable. As a result, efforts to rate compositions became one of the major projects in the modest amount of research done on teaching composition. Abandoning its earlier essay tests, in the 1960s the College Board expressed confidence in its new English Composition Test: two 20-minute objective exercises that "have proved to be good indicators of skill in composition," along with 20 minutes of "actual writing."[154] Nonetheless, other researchers concluded that, whether made by teachers or testers, objective tests of writing are little more than measures of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and usage.[155] These are precisely the mechanics which the National Assessment of Educational Progress has shown to be fairly well-mastered by students, unlike their poor performance in syntactical and rhetorical areas.

It has been pointed out that writing and reading are not only commonly taught differently, but that they are tested differently: reading by multiple-choice items and writing by qualitative assessments.[156] This is an overstatement. A similar testing format is used in both areas, and their tests raise some of the same criticisms. Although reading tests are more widely used and accepted, they are still faulted for not requiring strategies that are important in ordinary reading and critical thinking in reading. And, despite the prevailing scorn of standardized tests in English, studies show that teacher-made tests, the widely-available end-of-unit tests in language textbooks, and classroom questions in literature, composition, and language were like external examinations in concentrating upon knowledge and not upon comprehension.[157]

It is common to blame external examinations for shaping the ways in which teachers teach, or for causing an activity like writing to be largely overlooked because it is not amenable to traditional testing forms. It is worth considering, however, that both tests and teacher practices reflect larger social and cultural expectations. In this view, tests are themselves a consequence and not a cause of technocratic impulses in schooling. They are sustained by the large classes that also assure that, if teachers assign frequent writing, many will grade the themes on the basis of their mechanical correctness.

Management Systems: Bureaucracies and Psychologies

Technology is less its products than it is a way of working, a method of attacking problems through planning and precision. In one prominent educator's words, technique "converts spontaneous and unreflective behavior into behavior that is deliberate and rationalized."[158] Between 1910 and 1930, in the interests of order and efficiency, school managers borrowed "scientific management" principles of people- and paper-processing from American business and industry. As the functions of the schools came to include providing lunch programs, transportation, recreation, and vocational and adult education, the technologies of management also grew to coordinate them.

Standardization is associated with bureaucratic systems. An early manifestation of standards-setting was the acceptance, where population density permitted, of the graded school. This hastened the adoption of graded series of schoolbooks. Previously, lessons were merely graded, by difficulty, within a single book and, later, among books in a single series. The subsequent step in rationalization was to achieve some uniformity across series, so that the Third Reader (or the First Grammar) in one publisher's series was equivalent in difficulty to that in other series. Uniformity in texts, and later in curriculum packages, was a form of "teacher-proofing": an effort to secure acceptable

(i.e., standard) results despite the suspicion that many teachers, in a mass and rapidly growing system, were ill-trained, inexperienced, or incompetent.

Supervision and examination were part of the same process. As early as 1864, the Regents of the State of New York substituted written tests in various school subjects, for oral tests and principals' recommendations, for the purpose of determining whether a student had completed the elementary school course. Their confidence in this new, "objective" procedure was vindicated when students' passage rates dropped to half their previous level.[159] Imitating the colleges, elementary and secondary schools adopted written examinations to replace much of the older system of recitation and oral examination. This was testimony to the society's passion for objectification and accountability, and reflected rising expectations of written literacy as well.

From the beginnings of the movement to construct a rational base for setting educational standards and achieving uniformity in teaching practices, the still-young science of psychology seemed to hold the most promise. Psychology might determine whether selections for a literary anthology had pedagogical merit--as well as moral or aesthetic value. It might indicate the pace at which average children should move from writing words to writing sentences and paragraphs. It might determine the amount of practice that was optimal in achieving and maintaining some acceptable standard of legibility in penmanship. In the search for such guidance, theory and practice in the teaching of English has been successively influenced by various psychologies: the connectionism of Edward L. Thorndike, the more purposive paradigm of the followers of John Dewey, gestalt theory, the ideas of Jerome Bruner, and the stages of cognitive development of Jean Piaget.[160]

"Thinking" or "problem-solving" has figured prominently in 20th-century American educational theory and rhetoric. It is not surprising, then, that the NCTE Commission on English stated in 1956 that "writing should help the young student to observe and to organize his experience--in other words, to think."[161] When the cognitive psychologists and the psycholinguists came on the scene, they were greeted with some of the confidence that their predecessors had gained--and lost. By the 1980s, their fascination with the technologies of artificial intelligence enlisted interest in the use of computers in the teaching of writing. A few generative and interactive computer programs are today being cited as applying the new theories on writing and reading processes and their interactions.[162]

A Product of Schools and Technology: The Autonomous Youth Culture

Before "Sesame Street" and Head Start programs were created, preschoolers' knowledge of English letter names was a good predictor of their reading achievement in the primary grades. With television, however, deliberate teaching of letter names is becoming a part of the shared culture, rather than a characteristic of childrearing in certain social classes.[163] This is one example of the many ways in which television and the other modern media of communication impinge on schooling. The electronic media of communication have also strengthened a youth culture, one that extended the "peer group" from a school-bounded age cohort into a national and international phenomenon. The cultural referees for most youth have become characters in television programs and music and sports stars, rather than those found in books or their teachers, preachers, and parents, as once was the case. In the face-to-face society of 19th-century America, which James Coleman describes as "experience rich and information poor," books read at

home, in school, or in Sunday School were windows onto the larger world.[164] So were letters received from distant kin and friends. But radio, film, and television annihilated such provincialism even more than did the automobile and the airplane. Schools lost their monopoly on dispensing information to youth. They also lost something of their authority as the custodians of culture. By the 1950s, in the pages of *Language Arts*, as well as the popular press, television was replacing comic books as the perceived threat to desirable social learning.

Similarly, it is predicted that the micro-electronics revolution will alter further how people acquire and process information, how they learn and relearn, and how they communicate. No longer is there the assumption that youth is the period for acquiring the permanent base of habits and skills of a lifetime; this diminishes the importance attached to schools. What the telephone has done to personal writing, television has apparently done to reading. But these de-legitimating effects of the media are wider still: a culture of play and consumption has been spread across the world, a counter-culture to the school culture, one that treats all work as a "middle-class hang up," including class- and homework.

Three decades of decrying the effects of television have proved futile. Therefore, some educators stopped worrying about competing with the media as entertainment and distraction. They began to think, *once again*, of how teaching might respond to a view of learning as interactive, not receptive. Their numbers and their optimism about both student collaboration in learning and the integration of different language activities were reportedly greater in Britain and Canada than in the United States, however. Here, a view of English as a skills subject--"the iron grip" of the basic skills mentality--was harder to shake. In the words of one American respondent to an international survey, "it is the skills aspect of English which keeps it required, and if it were only there for humanizing effect, it could easily go the way of art and music: nice stuff but frills compared to the real business of preparing kids for the cold, cruel world."[165]

FUNCTIONALISM: LANGUAGE AND AMERICAN CULTURE

Complaints about the pinched character of American culture antedate the Revolution. Thus, a teacher complained in 1727 of his "Country People" who wished only as much writing and arithmetic in their schools as would "serve the Common occasions of vulgar People."[166] William Brown's 1826 school copybook combined essays on "Independence" and "Intemperance" with Cowper's poetry and "Forms Used in Transacting Business."[167] Robert Connors describes this century's required course in composition as being, more than any other subject, one "shaped by perceived social and cultural needs."[168] Because of this utilitarian tradition, a survey of American research on writing published in the mid-1980s concludes, "Even a moderately optimistic forecast would have to allow that the teaching of writing will probably continue to take place in a relatively uncongenial cultural environment."[169]

It is not surprising, then, that the educators at the 1966 Anglo-American Conference discovered, despite their shared language and history, consistent differences among themselves in the teaching of English. The British (and Canadians) reportedly gave more attention to creative writing and to the student's inner-life "as a means to self-discovery, self-fulfillment, self-enhancement." In contrast, the Americans taught more grammar and defined reform as the development of uniform language and literature

sequences from first to twelfth grade. Herbert J. Muller made an attempt to compromise these differing values, arguing that "practical hard-headed men need to be reminded that good creative writing is a product of thought and hard work, not merely of imagination."[170]

"Functional Literacy"

In its 1926 *The Place of English in American Life*, an NCTE Committee updated the society's historic cultural preference for the useful over the "merely ornamental" by recommending that more attention be given to language activities that present difficulties in a heterogeneous society. The list included preparing reports for a superior and instructions for subordinates, conversing at social gatherings, writing memos for one's self, making introductions, listening at a public meeting, and talking on the telephone.[171] A half-century later, some educators feared that technological advances would usurp the place of reading and writing. Folklorist John Szwed noted of many businesses that "it is a mark of success not to be directly responsible for one's own communications in written form--secretaries are employed to turn oral statements into acceptable written ones."[172] This would represent an interesting historical reversal, with functionaries called upon to be ever more able readers and writers, while bosses receive information by listening to their employees and peers and giving oral direction to their subordinates.

Scholars may debate who the principal intended recipients are of employers' demands for better writers, but there is little doubt that the demands of "functional literacy" have risen greatly in this century. Consistently more persons work in clerical and service jobs, where written and oral language skills are at a premium. Apart from employment demands, ordinary participation in society, including consumerism, requires knowledge and skills in writing and reading that exceed the older criterion of functional literacy: successful completion of five years of schooling. Many written materials of daily life surpass grade 12 difficulty. But, at the same time, the concept of functional literacy emphasizes reading competency--not writing. And, in practice, both economic and social functioning place more demands on people to read than to write. The net effect of this is, again, to concentrate instruction upon reading, to neglect writing, and to judge the utility of writing by its contribution to skillful reading or to "thinking"--better yet to "problem-solving," which has high value in this culture.

The Dominance of Expository Writing

In 1913, Frank N. Freeman observed that, historically, penmanship had degenerated from a fine art to one of the educational disciplines.[173] But writing always contained within it a strong element of the utilitarian, and it was certainly espoused as a school subject chiefly for its ability to support memory and to display learning. Early in its history as a discrete subject of instruction, composition was described as consisting of four types: narration (telling a story), description (appealing to the visual imagination), argument (proving some proposition), and exposition (explaining a meaning).[174] The dominant rhetorical tradition in the colleges at the end of the 19th century also became the unquestioned paradigm for teaching writing until the 1960s: it made argument and exposition the chief business of writing classes. While emotion was assigned to oratory and imagination to literature, reason and objectivity were assigned to composition.

A tempering of this tradition in the interests of the experience curriculum came by the 1930s, as educators recommended that topics for expository writing be related to student interest. Still, "interminable senior essays and long articles prepared for contest themes, unrelated to the experience or interest of the writer, have probably done more to check normal expression and to foster plagiarism than any other activity in school," noted the authors of *The English Language Arts* in 1952.[175] As increasing numbers of high school graduates headed for college, expository writing was required for larger proportions of secondary school students, and oftentimes without regard to earlier warnings. So, by the 1950s, English teachers began to be cautioned about their earlier "overstress on the writing of personal experiences, imaginative compositions, letters, or other forms of composition."[176] For example, curriculum development at the University of Georgia, under Project English, was based on the principle that elementary school children were doing too much writing from personal experience, imaginative composition, and letters "at the expense of expository writing"; the remedy was "continuous practice in writing that requires skill in thinking, planning, organizing, and composing, especially writing that requires the extended development of a single idea or point of view."[177] Disregarding the repeated advice of college composition teachers that high school composition programs focus on short compositions, not lengthy research papers, many English teachers imitated university professors in assigning research reports. By the late 1950s, 65% of course outlines for Grades 11 and 12 recommended writing a research paper.[178]

Even as the link between school composition and college work was being strengthened--"This is practical preparation for papers and tests in college, and you may need it on the job"--voices were again being raised against the dominance of exposition. It was pointed out that creative writing stopped too soon in American schools, around Grade 5, and that the subsequent "conventional assignments in expository writing and drill in mechanics" had, as its outcome, only rebellion against writing.[179] NCTE's Commission on the English Curriculum reported, in 1966, that some teachers believe that "expository writing is not the only or even the best way" to achieve the goals of writing. Nonetheless, it proved hard to question its practical value:

> As a form of writing, exposition seems ideal to achieve the most important ends of composition, particularly in high school and college. It is useful in school as well as in adult life. It can be a way of teaching the adequacy, precision, and order of ideas; it can be a way, indeed, of discerning ideas. Through it a writer can come to know himself.[180]

Once again, by the 1970s, a sufficient sentiment favoring "expressive writing" was gathering. In their disagreement with the dominant tradition, some critics again related writing to reading. Nor was expressive writing "impractical." Its proponents contended that writing to learn, "speculative writing," is different than writing to communicate, but hardly less practical in a changing society.[181] What one sees in this example is that both the reformers and the exponents of the status quo accept the culture's practical values and argue their different agenda from that point of implicit agreement.

LIBERATIONIST MOVEMENTS: LANGUAGE AND FREEDOM

Since the 19th century, critics have faulted schooling in the United States that was satisfied with mechanical reading ("parrot reading") and stilted writing, that produced students who ciphered by rote-learned rules, who could rattle off the "imports"

and "exports" of Brazil but were stymied when asked, "What are the *exports* of your father's farm?"; "What does he *import*?" Along with their criticisms, an alternative pedagogy was proposed.

Progressive Education

In his 1835 *The School-Master's Friend*, Theodore Dwight, Jr., offered advice on selecting material for initial instruction in reading that was to be echoed by subsequent generations of educators:

> Familiar lessons should first be used in reading; and the more familiar the better. Even sentences composed by the scholars themselves, corrected if they need it by the master, may well serve for early lessons. Children should first be made to read what they understand, and something that relates to their own circumstances, and interests their feelings.[182]

Historian Daniel Calhoun calls this principle one that "in later years and in other hands was to lead both to the most insipid and to the most radical of texts."[183]

During the era of pedagogical "freedom" (some said "license") known as progressive education, Dwight's idea of "experience charts" was widely recommended and frequently used. Children composed collaborative accounts of their activities in the primary reading program and in social studies and science lessons. Experience charts provided practice in writing and reading, linking them in a way that was consistent with the language experience philosophy. Experience charts posted on classroom walls also gave public testimony to the wealth of "activities" and "units of study" that enlivened the school day, and to the "child-centeredness" that animated the teacher. These tenets of progressive pedagogy were the conventional wisdom from before 1920 to about 1955--despite the snipings of "cranky reactionaries" and the failure of many teachers to observe them in practice, certainly in most secondary schools.

The elementary school was the natural environment of progressive education--for the reasons already suggested and, perhaps, because of greater parental permissiveness in the education of young children, at least in the white middle-class. Because of the parallel movement to limit children's reading vocabulary to commonly encountered and well-understood words, the experience chart method did produce "stories" that sounded no more like children's natural language than did their basal series. Imitating the style of first grade texts, teachers helped children compose their own dry-as-dust *reading material*: "We went to the park. We saw the big trees. We had fun." In 1954, the Commission on the English Curriculum offered a richer example of a teacher "guiding" children's spontaneous expressions into another story about a park visit:

> Lots of leaves are on the ground.
> Yellow leaves! Red leaves!
> We pile the leaves up.
> We kick the leaves down.
> We get hot! We have fun![184]

Freedom from the style, as well as the assumptions, of vocabulary-controlled books--and an expanded conception of the relationships of writing and reading--could have come earlier had the progressives understood that young children can and do write

before they are considered to have mastered the fundamentals of reading. They did not understand this, however. Witness Henry Suzzallo, a professor and later a university president. In 1913, he described "modern" teachers as those who ensured that children had the requisite experience and vocabulary to read a text by such pre-reading activities as story-telling, conversational lessons, action work, and "picture writing"; writing itself did not figure in his thinking about reading readiness.[185] Four decades later, in 1954, the book *Language Arts for Today's Children* reiterated the accepted view that "impression precedes expression; intake precedes outflow in all aspects of language learning." This meant writing only *after* reading. These authors did observe preschoolers' scribblings--imitations of adults seen writing. They also concluded that "writing becomes a necessary tool for school experience with the beginning of the primary years," and offered examples of sensible correlations of writing and reading in the existing model.[186] Nevertheless, their limited conception of early writing and the relations of composing writing to comprehending reading showed little advance over the past half-century. The reigning assumption remained one of sequential development: hearing words -> speaking words -> seeing words -> recognizing words (reading) -> spelling words -> writing words. Of the skills of the "language arts cycle," writing is the last of all.

The Dartmouth Conference

Regardless of what has been said heretofore, the high schools had not been entirely impervious to aspects of progressive education. The language experience approach to the teaching of literature, for example, dictated that the selection of texts be governed by their correspondence with youths' experiences (content over form). When students were asked to provide literary analyses, their oral or written assignments often asked them to comment on a work's personal significance rather than its structure or place in literary history. Yet when 50 British and American educators (there was one Canadian) met at Dartmouth College in the summer of 1966, under the sponsorship of the Carnegie Corporation, considerable dissatisfaction with high school English was unleashed in the name of liberating English by encouraging responsive reading and expressive writing. The various work groups decried school English's estrangement from the culture *as the student knows it*, although they did not pay much attention to the issues of cultural diversity that were soon to become commonplace. Participants heard pleas for a kind of teaching that facilitated, or at least did not inhibit, the dialogic relationship of reader and text: "What is vital is the interplay between his personal world and the world of the writer."[187]

The interaction of reader and writer through the text was not the only joining to be promoted. The conferees attacked the dissection of the English curriculum into composition periods, language periods, literature periods, and perhaps poetry periods. John Dixon thought that the Conference's "decision to advocate a unitary rather than a fragmented approach to English" was especially significant. It reaffirmed aspects of human experience as the unifying principle of English education, articulated by NCTE in the 1930s, and called on flexible teaching strategies instead of rigid lesson plans. The Conference discussed talk and drama as resources for a revitalized writing. Revealing examples of young children's writing were shared, leading some of the participants to think more than they had before about the writing process and youthful writing as "embryonic literature." Finally, the Conference recommended that teachers, at all levels, "should have more opportunities to enjoy and refresh themselves in their subject, using language in operation for all its central purposes--in imaginative drama, writing and speech, as well as the response to literature."[188]

The idea that teachers, too, become writers was implemented in the next decade in the Bay Area Writing Project. There is little evidence of a direct influence of the Dartmouth Conference upon practice, however. In the Forward to the 1975 edition of *Growth through English*, James Squire and James Britton tried to explain why so many expectations spawned at Dartmouth remained unfulfilled. One factor was certainly the end of federal funding, as policy-makers' attention was transferred to civil rights-inspired school improvement and then to the Vietnam War. The place to find the impact of *the Dartmouth ideal*, they concluded, was in the enterprise of individuals, the existence of small networks of teacher groups, the writings of teachers not directly touched by the conference.[189] Much the same could be said about the impact of earlier ideals, previous commissions and their reports, other seminal thinkers--all refracted through the stubborn realities of humans and their institutions.

WRITING AND READING, RECONSIDERED

Revisionist historians of education, especially those with anarchist or Marxist leanings, have included literacy campaigns and school expansion in their radical critiques of contemporary developed societies.[190] They argue that modern nation states substitute schooled-language for natural language as a means of extending political control over their citizens. Form becomes superior to substance. Experience loses status to books, and adults without academic credentials are consigned to society's margins. Meanwhile, children's "proper literacy" and common-sensical understanding are eroded by the schools' emphasis on reading ability and vicarious mastery, this according to linguist Wayne O'Neil.[191] Like the earliest exponents of biblical literacy, what the partisans of all other literacies--including "scientific literacy" and "computer literacy"--have in mind is wider access to what the Resnicks call the "received wisdom" and "the love of the familiar." Greg Myers raises similar issues of ideology in his commentary on Sterling Leonard's 1917 *English Composition as a Social Problem* and on contemporary reform movements in the teaching of writing.[192]

In such exposes of literacy's "true meaning," it is common to find writing and reading distinguished in their effects. While reading is called consensual and conservative, writing is described as egocentric and change-oriented; reading connotes dependence and vulnerability, writing its opposites; the one transmits, the other transforms. The schools and curricular tracks that educate the children of the power-elite feature more writing for the reasons that the United States Navy offers instruction in reading to enlisted men and instruction in writing to officers.[193] The type of reading assigned especially in the lower tracks in schools and in adult functional-literacy programs features such printed materials as "instructions, labels, signs, forms, and form letters--types of communication generally intended to elicit passive behaviors or to encourage conformist responses that reproduce or further institutionalize existing social relations," in the words of British sociologist Kenneth Levine. Public schools, and even universities, would lose support if they stressed anything but the most "academic" writing since, by its nature, "writing conveys and records innovation, dissent, and criticism; above all, it can give access to political mechanisms and the political process generally, where many of the possibilities of personal and social transformation lie."[194]

Is this true of writing? Is writing as revolutionary as these theorists claim? Not necessarily. If writing entails putting together "details from personal sensory experience, from vicarious experience (reading, listening, viewing), and from inferences,"[195] it has ample opportunity to transmit little or nothing more than that which was received; and

the more technically skilled in mechanics the writer is, the more effective in transmitting "the received wisdom." (This observation may remind the reader of copy writers in advertising agencies or paid publicists; James Moffett dismisses writers of this sort as paraphrasers rather than authentic authors.) If the majority of a conservative public wishes to control what is read, it desires the same of the content of writing. Assigned writing, as well as assigned reading, ensures that many students will be unengaged by the creative possibilities that inhere in comprehending and composing. Considering public reaction to the student protest movements of the 1960s and early '70s, there is some reason to agree with Moffett:

> Both laity and educators fear the liberation of thought and behavior that students would achieve if talking, reading, and writing were taught most effectively--that is, if these powerful tools were freely given to youngsters for their personal investigation.[196]

Yet there are those--parents, politicians, teachers, and researchers--who do welcome in *both* writing and reading the possibilities of creativity, critical thinking, and empowerment.

For some, like Moffett, their conviction means teaching writing and reading socially, as speaking and listening are learned, and engaging the home and the community in the process. These men and women remind us of the progressives of an earlier generation. For others it may mean exploiting the new technologies to provide unparallel opportunities for independent and individualized instruction. The ideas of the Dartmouth Seminar--a renewed interest in the learner, his development, and the processes of using language to learn--were clearly taking on new life in the 1980s. If they often sound familiar, they also contain certain new elements. Moreover, these ideals are being reworked in a world *not quite like* that which has ever been known before. And of such threads is tomorrow's history being woven.

Footnotes

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